



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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District Court Celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month with Supreme Court Case Reenactments and Special Naturalization Ceremony

Chicago, Ill.- In celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-hosted "When Citizenship Depended on Race," two Supreme Court case reenactments and a panel discussion. Following the reenactments, Circuit Judge John Z. Lee, the first Asian American to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, administered the Oath of Allegiance to four citizenship candidates from China, Iraq, Jordan, and the Philippines.

"The Court is delighted to celebrate AAPI Month. Today's program was a joyful celebration in which we recognized the significant contributions of Asian Americans to our Court and the nation and welcomed new American citizens from four Asian countries," said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

Circuit Judge John Z. Lee, District Judge Edmond E Chang, District Judge Martha M. Pacold, District Judge Manish S. Shah, Magistrate Judge Sunil R. Harjani, and Magistrate Judge Young B. Kim participated in the reenactment as U.S. Supreme Court Justices. Members of the bar and representatives from numerous Asian American bar associations played other characters in the reenactment.

The event featured reenactments of arguments and discussion of two historically significant immigration cases in the U.S. Supreme Court: *United States v. Ozawa*, 260 U.S. 178 (1922) (finding Takao Ozawa, a Japanese-born man who had lived in the United States for 20 years, ineligible for naturalization because he was not "Caucasian") and *United States v. Thind*, 261 U.S. 204 (1923) (denying naturalized citizenship to Bhagat Singh Thind, an Indian Sikh man who was technically Caucasian but whom the Court determined did not meet the definition of "white"). Under the Naturalization Act of 1906, then in effect, only "free white persons" and "persons of African nativity or persons of African descent" could naturalize, so these two Supreme Court cases turned on whether Thind and Ozawa could establish that they were "free white persons" under the statute. A panel discussion of the cases followed the citizenship ceremony.

The event was co-hosted by the Federal Bar Association, Chicago Chapter, and the Asian American Bar Association of Chicago. Co-sponsors included the Asian American Judges Association of Illinois, the Chinese American Bar Association, the Filipino American Lawyers Association of Chicago, the Japanese American Bar Association, the Korean American Bar Association of Chicago, and the South Asian Bar Association of Chicago.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is celebrated in the month of May. It recognizes the vast contributions and influence of Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans to the United States.

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